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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2008

In Today's Papers

Turkey and U.S. Agree on the Passage of Aid Ships to Georgia  
All media outlets report that the U.S. and Turkey have reached an agreement to allow ships meeting the guidelines of the Montreux Convention through the Turkish straits. Mainstream Hurriyet reports "The U.S. has stepped back and agreed to abide by the Montreux Agreement." Mainstream Vatan notes Foreign Ministry Spokesman Burak Ozugergin told the press, "The U.S. did not ask Turkey for permission to send the Mercy or the Comfort through the Bosphorus." In "Passage to the Aid Ships," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports "Turkey approves the passage of two U.S. ships stationed in Greece." Meanwhile, the paper expresses skepticism about real U.S. intentions, warning that the U.S. "may manipulate Bulgaria and Romania to reassess the Montreux Agreement" in order to "increase U.S. and NATO presence in the Black Sea." Liberal Radikal reports, "The U.S. and Turkey have agreed," that, "the USS McFaul and the USCGC Dallas will pass through the Turkish straits within a week." Mainstream Aksam columnist Sedat Sertoglu writes, "In 2001, Turkey negotiated a deal with the Chinese on the passage of a former Russian aircraft carrier which the Chinese bought from Ukraine to turn into a casino. This vessel was 300 meters long with a tonnage of 67,000 and Ankara allowed its passage," thus, "There should be a solution that can be found to this problem so Turkey is not a country that blocks humanitarian aid to Georgia."

Editorial Commentary on U.S. Aid Vessels Passing through the Straits

Ali Sirmen in the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "We must see that the U.S. offer to send giant humanitarian aid vessels to Georgia would actually be a show of force. We must not forget that the U.S. may try to manipulate Romania and Bulgaria to change the Montreux Treaty in order to increase U.S. and/or NATO presence in the Black Sea."

Russia May Recognize South Ossetia, Abkhazia over U.S.-Poland Missile Deal  
All media outlets express anxiety that the missile defense deal between the U.S. and Poland will be answered by Russia with a

missile defense deal between Moscow and Minsk, as well as Russian plans to officially recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In "A Birthday for Abkhazia," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "The waters are not calming in Georgia," as "Russia plans to recognize the independence of Abkhazia." Leftist Taraf reports in "Missile Conqueror Rice Seals the Deal With the Poles," as "Warsaw requests Patriot Missiles to strengthen their defense system," against "Russian retaliation" via a missile defense pact between Russia and Belarus. Mainstream Vatan characterizes the U.S. agreement with Poland as "The Signature That Enraged Russia." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the headline, "Russia Prepares for Recognition," of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as parliament is preparing for an emergency session on August 25th. In "Another Shield Is Necessary for This Shield," liberal Radikal writes, "Russia and Minsk are developing a missile defense program in response to the U.S. missile defense agreement with Poland." Columnist Ismet Berkan for Radikal notes, "If Russia recognizes the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, things will become much more complicated," as "Russia will not negotiate regarding its own backyard." Rusen Cakir of mainstream Vatan writes, "Despite Turkey's recent new ties with Russia, Turkey is unlikely to abandon its alliance with the U.S," but, "Turkey wants to take a neutral position in this new Cold War in order to mediate between the U.S. and Russia." Taraf writes in "Russian Wrath against the NATO-Georgia Commission," that, "NATO will provide Georgia with military assistance," which prompted Russian Deputy Military Chief Nogovitsin to call the assistance, "a Blitzkrieg provocation."

#### Editorial Commentary on the Crisis in the Caucasus

ANKARA 00001512 002 OF 003

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah (8/21): "40 years ago Prague woke up to the sound of Russian tanks. At that time, the entire Western world urged the international community to stand next to Czechoslovakia and isolate Russia. Today, the U.S. is urging the international community to isolate Russia because of their actions in Georgia. Within this new Cold War climate, PM Erdogan went to Baku to get support for the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform." There is no doubt that Azerbaijan will support such an initiative, along with Russia and Georgia. This platform should bring the regional countries together to achieve joint. If stability and prosperity are brought to the Caucasus, these countries will support each other. Of course, for all these, Turkey is the only country that can spearhead these efforts."

Fikret Bila commented in mainstream Milliyet (8/21): "In order to overcome recent problems, people in the Caucasus should focus on using their natural resources to increase their level of prosperity. The people of the Caucasus region should not lean on a powerful country but should put aside ethnic problems and learn to live together in peace and prosperity. Just like the countries in the Middle East, none of the countries in Caucasus would benefit from a war."

Rusen Cakir in mainstream Vatan believes that Turkey is in a difficult position in this new Cold War because of many reasons. Even though ties between Turkey and Russia have improved recently, Turkey will not give up its traditional alliance with the U.S. in order to support Russia. In addition, Washington has not approached Turkey's Caucasus Platform initiative very warmly; thus, in the future, pro-U.S. Azerbaijan and pro-U.S. Georgia will eventually pull away from this initiative. It will be difficult for Turkey to please Russia and the U.S. at the same time. Armenia should be included in this initiative but this may not be very easy because of the existing problems. Finally, there is no certainty about this platform. Turkey's image may suffer in the end. I don't think Turkey has many trump cards in its hand that would allow it to pass this difficult period without suffering any injuries."

Ismet Berkan wrote in liberal Radikal: "Turkey is exerting efforts to create a Caucasus platform, but if we can manage to bring Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to talk with each other, that in and of itself would be a success. Turkey would benefit from this as well. Yet at the same time, realistically speaking, I don't think we can even achieve that much. Russia will not negotiate with

anyone anymore about the places which it considers as its backyard. Things will get even more complicated if Moscow recognizes the independence of Abkhazia and Ossetia. The developments in the region should be very closely watched."

#### PKK Link in Istanbul and Mersin Bombings

Mainstreams Sabah and Milliyet report the same kind of strengthened TNT explosives used in the Istanbul-Gungoren bombings was used in this week's Mersin bombings. Sabah reports these explosives were brought in to Turkey by the PKK. Milliyet quotes Mersin Governor Huseyin Aksoy saying "we expect that the suicide bomber in Mersin was a PKK member."

#### Osman Hayal Detained in Hrant Dink Murder Case

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman report Osman Hayal, older brother of the Hrant Dink murder suspect Yasin Hayal, was detained by police in the Black Sea city of Trabzon and sent to Istanbul. Osman's mobile phone records show he was in Istanbul on the day Dink was murdered. Eyewitnesses to the Dink murder told the police hitman Ogun Samast was accompanied by someone during the assassination. Papers say it was a "scandal" that Osman Hayal was interrogated 11 months after the Dink murder. Osman Hayal's detention raised hopes for resolving the mystery behind the murder, say papers.

#### Madrid Plane Crash

ANKARA 00001512 003 OF 003

All papers report that MD-82 type jetliner bound for the Canary Islands crashed during takeoff. It was the worst air disaster in Spain nearly 25 years in which 153 of a total of 172 passengers and crew died. A Turkish citizen, named Mehmet Erdil, is on the Spainair passenger list, but his status has yet to be confirmed. Due to the bodies burned in the fire, the identification process will take some time, papers noted. Vatan adds that the MD-80 series do not have a good reputation because accidents involving the planes have cost the lives of more than 1000 passengers in 58 accidents since they were launched for commercial use in 1980. Mainstream papers, Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan and Sabah highlight that a Turkish Airlines plane was taxiing to take off right after the Spanish jet.

#### Editorial Commentary on Radar Deployment in Israel, Pakistan's Musharraf

Fikret Ertan in the Islamist-oriented Zaman: "According to the latest news, the U.S. wants to deploy X-band radars to Israel and the Czech Republic. The U.S. and Israel have agreed to deploy the radar in the Negev Desert in Israel. The system, to be activated early 2009, will be connected to the American early warning system, expanding the warning range to 2,000 km. It will give Israel precious time during a possible Iranian missile attack. This development concerns Iran the most. Turkey has intentions to set up its own shield, and must follow these developments closely."

Oktay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "There is nothing unusual about the resignation of Pakistan's President Musharraf, particularly given the country's history of military coups. Military interventions, religious exploitation in politics, and corruption are indispensable features of Pakistani politics. There is a common reality for those whose politics are based on personal animosity instead of principle and value. One wonders why Pakistani intellectuals do not look closely to their next door neighbor, India. While Pakistan struggles with military coups and corruption, India emerges as one of the most rapidly growing economies in the world. The main and most important difference between the two countries is the value of secularism. The Indian system does not allow the exploitation of religion for political aims, while politicians in Pakistan race each other to see who can give more concessions to religious fundamentalists."

#### TV News: CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

- The testing of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline in the

Erzincan province has begun.

- On Thursday, the National Security Council (MGK) will hold a meeting in Istanbul. The outgoing chief of the military General Staff Yasar Buyukanit will bid farewell to MGK members before his retirement.

- The Privatization Administration said the Council of State decision to suspend the privatization of nine motorways and two Bosphorus bridges would not affect the privatization process.

#### International News

- 56.5 percent of the Turkish Cypriots favor the implementation of a "two-state model" on the divided island of Cyprus.

- The deputy chief of Iran's atomic energy organization, Mohammad Saeedi, said talks on Tehran's nuclear drive with the IAEA were "positive" and would continue.

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